NEWS - FROM THE PAST & THE PRESENT

# An ex-slave lived to the age of 121 in Alabama and died in 1976 [photographs of ex-slaves]

by Donna R Causey

*Interesting newspaper article from Rome News Tribune January 13, 1976,*

*Rome, Georgia*

Elba, Alabama –

Charlie Porter, born a slave 121 years ago and perhaps the oldest man in Alabama, has died in the tin shack where he lived for decades without electricity or a telephone.

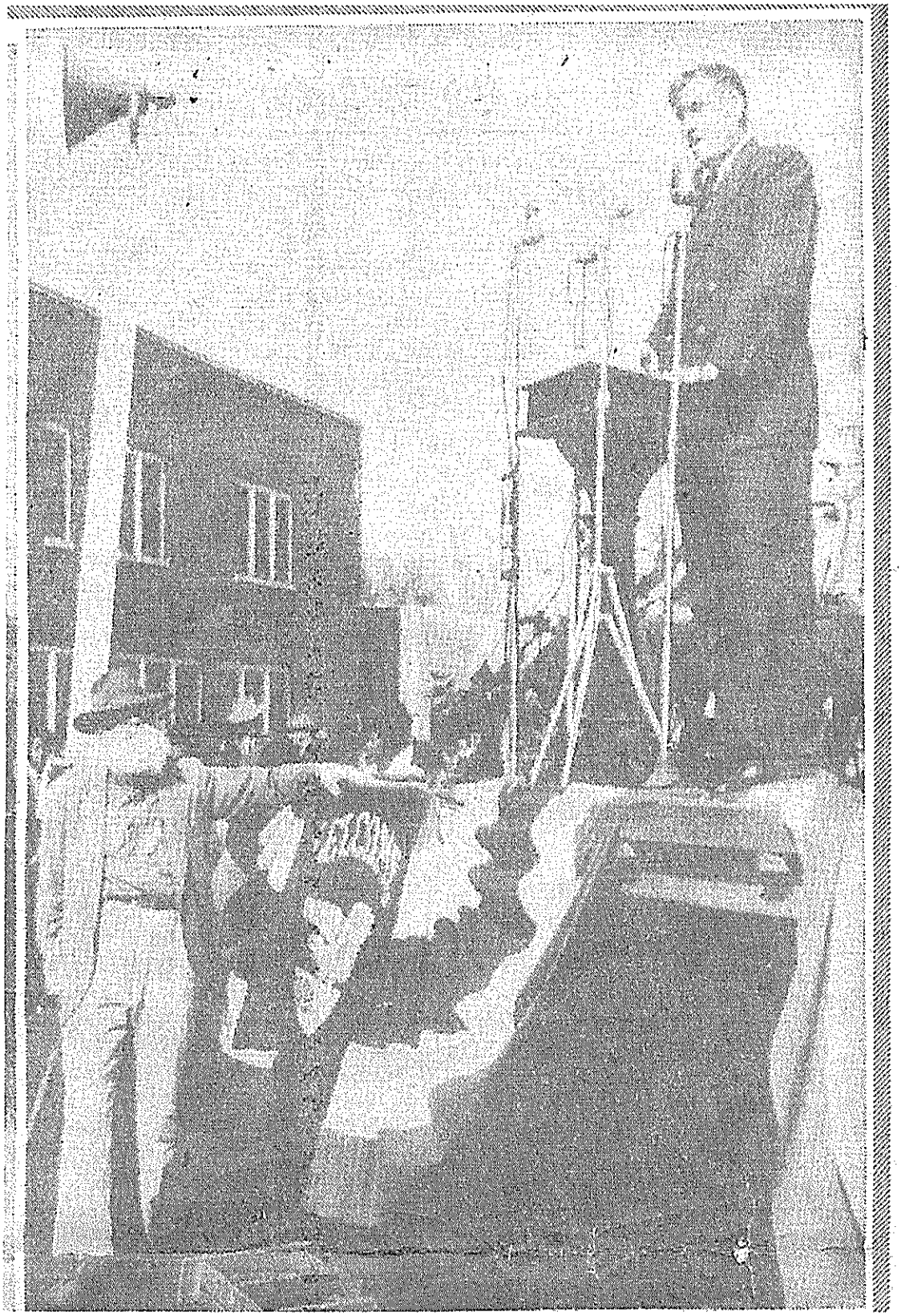
*Uncle Charlie Porter and Gov. George Wallace, on Courthouse square in Elba – picture taken by Sandy Bynum from Nell Gilmer*

*Uncle Charlie with Clive Collier, John Collier and Will Martin picture taken by Sandy Bynum from Nell Gilmer*

## Well-known in the town of Elba

"Uncle Charlie," as he was known in the rural southeast Alabama town where he lived his entire life, was found dead in his shack by friends Monday afternoon. Authorities said he died of natural causes.

Porter's age was based on a Medicaid card which listed his birth date as July 1854. A local funeral home is searching for relatives, and funeral services have been scheduled for Friday at Elba Zion Baptist Church.



*Uncle Charlie Porter picture taken by Sandy Bynum Nell Gilmer*

## Active despite his age

Despite his age, Porter was active even in the last years of his life, routinely setting out for Elba each morning on foot. He usually picked up a ride along the way, and once in town, with knapsack over his shoulder, he would purchase a jug of city water and return home.

## Front row seat with First Lady

Last September, when Gov. George C. Wallace's wife, Cornelia, was honored in her hometown of Elba, Porter was honored also by being given a front row seat on the parade reviewing stand with the states First Lady.

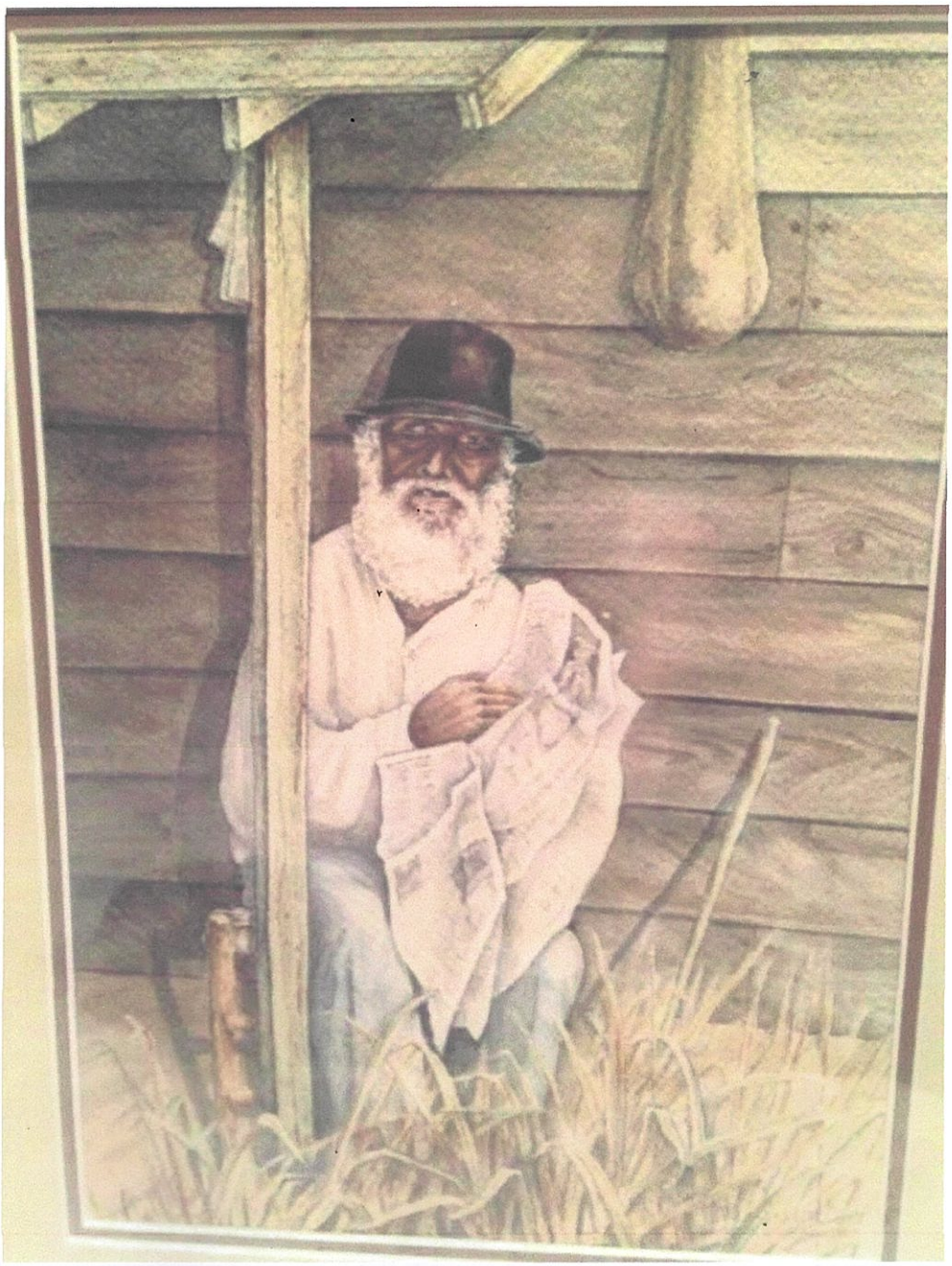
*Uncle Charlie Porter picture taken by Sandy Bynum from Nell Gilmer*

He was born a slave, whose name changed as he was sold to different families. He was owned by the Porters, and kept their name, at the time of emancipation.

## Beloved black man

This information about Charlie Porter is on Elba's city information page.

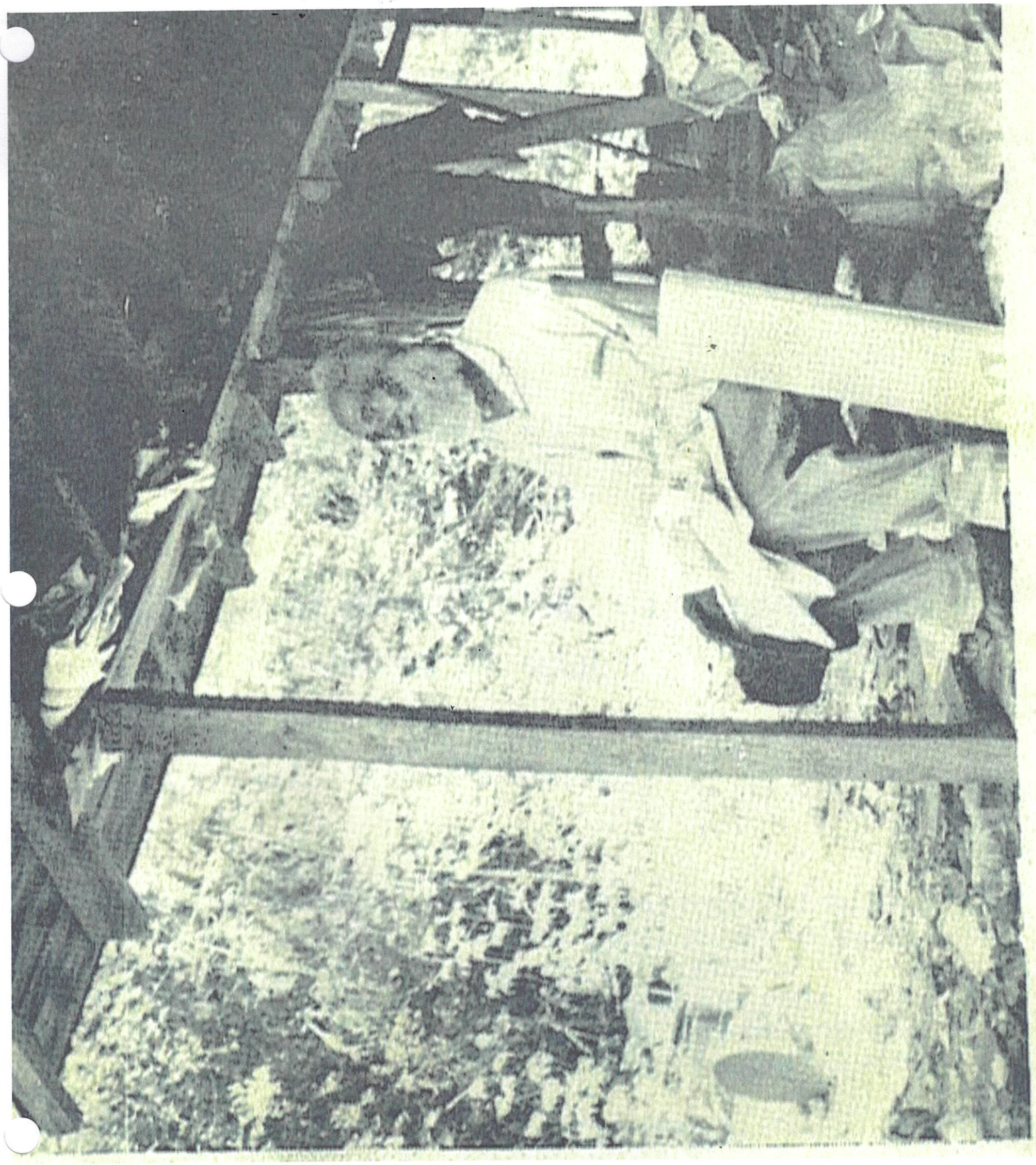
One of the most colorful residents in recent memory was Uncle Charlie Porter. He was a beloved black man who was born onto slavery and lived to be about 122 years old. He lived on Railroad Hill on the Old Samson Highway with his wife Quida Weedy. The couple did not have any children. This much loved, unique citizen walked to town everyday, wearing his overalls, black felt hat and brogan shoes. He always had a beard. Also, he carried a burlap sack over his shoulder, which held personal items and purchases of the day. His very loud, but pleasant voice could be heard for blocks.

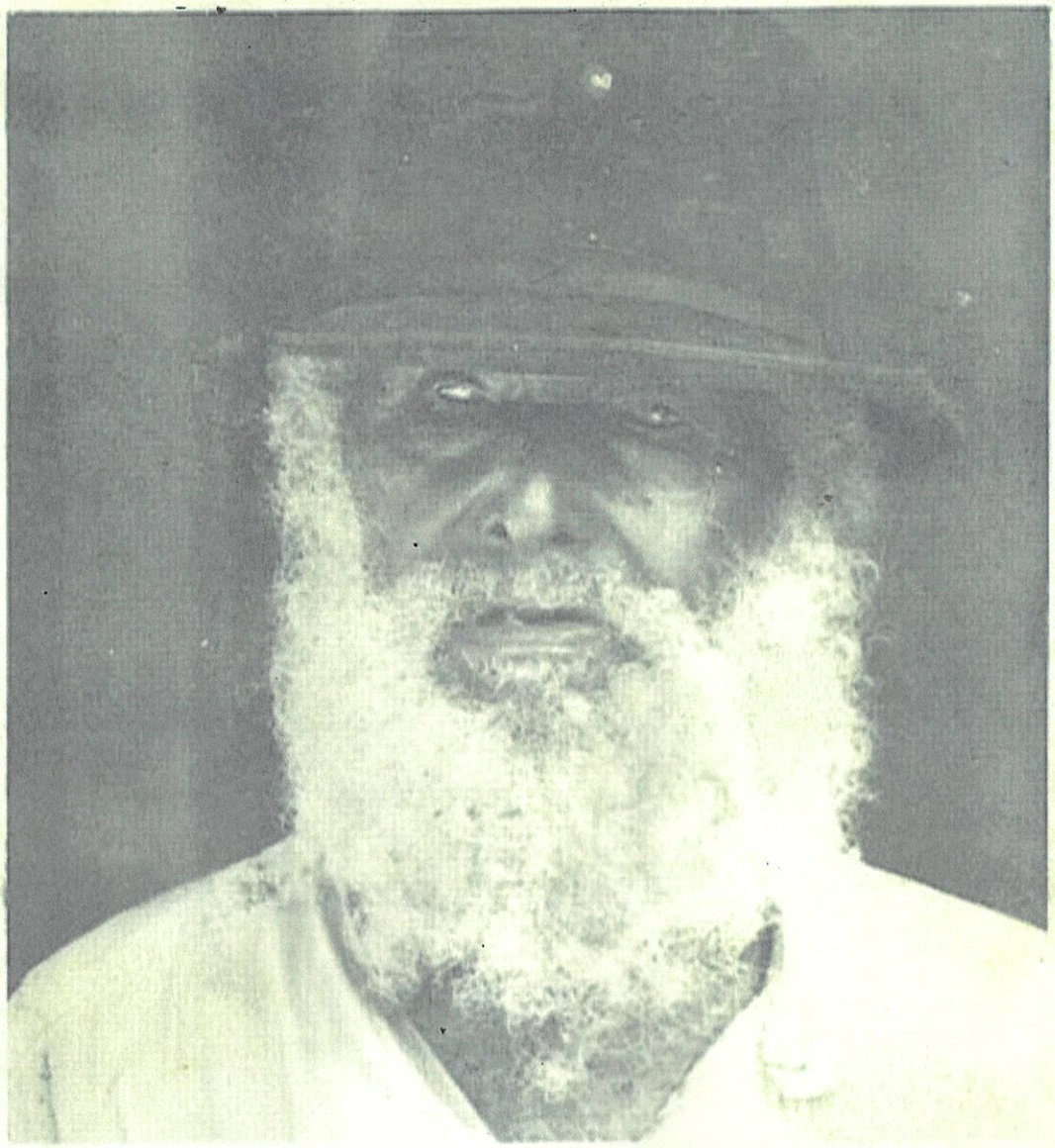


*Uncle Charlie Porter picture taken by Sandy Bynum from Nell Gilmer*

**NOTE FROM NELL GILMER:**

His funeral program says that he is buried in the Evergreen, the city cemetery, but there's not a marker and the funeral home has a new owner and there's nobody around who knows exactly where Uncle Charlie is buried. We are going to put a monument in an old section of the cemetery where many black families were buried before the new section opened up for all to be buried; not segregated.





# *Funeral Rites Of CHARLIE PORTER*

**ELBA ZION BAPTIST CHURCH**

**Newton Street - Elba, Alabama**

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 1976 - 10:00 A.M.**

**REV. JOHN L. GREYER**

# PROGRAM

## Processional

## Selection By Church Choir

## Scripture Reading

## Prayer

## Selection By Church Choir

## TRIBUTE

Mrs. Annie P. Bullard

## Expressions Of Citizens

(LIMIT - ONE MINUTE)

## Selection By Church Choir

## EULOGY

REV: JOHN L. GREYER

## Recessional

## Interment At Evergreen Cemetery

COLEMAN BROS. DIRECTING

## Acknowledgements

Close friends of Brother Porter wish to express their gratitude to all citizens, City, County and State officials, for kind deeds rendered during this time of bereavement.

Charlie was born in 1854, and died at 121 years of age. No other information is available as to his family or relatives.

MASONS WILL SERVE AS PALLBEARERS

FLOWER BEARERS WILL BE FRIENDS

# REMEMBRANCE OF UNCLE CHARLIE

By Rita Davis & Mary Phillips

Uncle Charlie used to go to the Grocery Store.
He would talk to his boys and girls and then he would go.
But Uncle Charlie, Uncle Charlie, he won't go by no more.

Uncle Charlie used to come down the road
With a sack on his back even when it was cold.
But Uncle Charlie, Uncle Charlie, he won't go by no more.

He remembered the Civil War.
He remembered when we didn't even have cars.
He Live in a little house in the wood –
Didn't have no electric lights, so he seen while he could.
But Uncle Charlie, Uncle Charlie, he won't go by no more.

Now Uncle Charlie was very old.
He lived a life that could never be told
But when ever Uncle Charlie would go by
People would say you know Charlie is very old.
But Uncle Charlie, Uncle Charlie, he won't go by no more.

Now this is the end of my song,
And as you know Uncle Charlie is dead and gone.
But, Uncle Charlie, Uncle Charlie –
Uncle Charlie won't come by no more.

Uncle Charlie Bicentennial file

- **Katie Allred** *says:*

January 31, 2016 at 7:30 am

That new share bar blocks all the content on the left, making it difficult to read on an iPhone 5s. Redevelop?

Reply

- **Eldon L. Merritt** *says:*

January 31, 2016 at 7:32 am

I would Love to be a part of any good group of people who are interested in locating the grave sites of Uncle Charlie Porter (Potter) and his wife Weedy. Charlie was always ready to share his story with anyone who asked. I feel that if the exact location cannot be found, then a fitting marker should be erected in the proper part of Evergreen cemetery in the City of Elba. It is with pride that I offer my help with time and money to bring closure to this lost and found matter. My heart felt thanks to Uncle Charlie.

Reply

- **Karizmah Yelverton Magwood** *says:*

June 24, 2016 at 10:33 am

I am in the process of getting a landmark for Mr. Porter

Reply

- **Fran Jackson** *says:*

- See more at: http://alabamapioneers.com/slave-elba-alabama/#sthash.50mqsy87.dpuf

Rome News-Tribune - Go
https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=348&dat=19760113&id=2gUvAAAAIBAJ&sjid=QTMDAAAAIBAJ&pg=4444,1420070&hl=en
Google Search (3) Facebook Welcome to Troy Ca WeightWatchers.com Elba UMC Member Log-In | Da eLearning Elba City Schools = O Other bookmarks
Rome News-Tribune - Jan 13, 1976 Browse this newspaper » Browse all newspapers » Page 2 of 5

Asked how he managed to survive, Fine said: "On California state unemployment benefits and food stamp assistance."

Fine said he had $31 in cash when he was arrested last week in San Rafael, Calif., plus about $75 in a checking account opened under the name of William James Lewes. He estimated the value of his personal property in California at no more than $200.

Fine, brought back to Wisconsin Saturday night, faces federal charges of sabotage, destruction of government property, conspiracy and unlawful flight to avoid prosecution, plus several state charges including first degree murder.

Mrs. Crabb continued his bond at $1 million.

All the charges stem from an explosion Aug. 24, 1970, that rocked Sterling Hall, home of the Army Math Research Center on the university's Madison campus. The predawn blast killed Robert Fassnacht, a physics researcher.

Fine was greeted by applause as he entered the courtroom Monday. He gave a clenched-fist salute, and smiled as he took his seat.

"Thank you, thank you all for coming," Fine told the crowd. "Thank you very much."

Fine's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Fine of Wil-

## Crop loss

SONOMA, Calif. (UPI) — Starlings and linnets are blamed for the loss of $3 million worth of wine grapes annually, says a Sonoma Valley winegrower. Starlings eat the whole berry, but linnets

got to realize this is very emotional."

## Former slave dies in Alabama

ELBA, Ala. (AP) — Charlie Porter, born a slave 121 years ago and perhaps the oldest man in Alabama, has died in the tin shack where he lived for decades without electricity or a telephone.

"Uncle Charlie," as he was known in the rural southeast Alabama town where he lived his entire life, was found dead in his shack by friends Monday afternoon. Authorities said he died of natural causes.

Porter's age was based on a Medicaid card which listed his birth date as July 1854. A local funeral home is searching for relatives, and funeral services have been scheduled for Friday at Elba Zion Baptist Church.

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He was born a slave, whose name changed as he was sold to different families. He was owned by the Porters, and kept their name, at the time of emancipation.

Miss Marple lives on, but one Christie novel is still locked away, to be published posthumously, and the passing of Miss Marple,too, is strongly rumored by the publishers.

Dame Agatha said she hatched her plots from real people and real places and newspapers often gave her inspiration.

It usually took her from three to six months to finish a book, which she pecked out with three fingers on a portable typewriter.

"It gets difficult to find new ways of murdering people," she once told an interviewer. "I try to steer clear of firearms because they need so

Rome News - Tribune

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pensive.

**More mini cars are coming from** Detroit. But Chrysler won't have its entry out until 1978. They don't say if that's calendar year 1978 or model 1978 introduced late in 1977. We'll see.

**Do you carry a roadside survival kit?** I know cars don't break down the way they used to, but a few tools along is a good idea. One basic should be a 9/16x½-inch wrench, a hammer and a screwdriver. Also jumper cables to start yours or another car. Best fifteen cent investment is a fuse for your fuse box, or one for each of the little sparkers. A tube of stop leak is good because radiator holes spring out at the worst times. A set of nail clippers has many uses, stripping wires, even filing points. What about an extra fan belt? Without a fan belt you don't move.

**Thinking pickup, or mini-pickup** or van? Millions of folks drive pickups as first and second cars. Why not stop by and take a look at our pickup parade. We're loaded. Stop by this week here at JULIAN HARRISON FORD in Rome for Courier or Ford pickups. Either one really totes a load!

HEAR THE STONE BROTHERS
IN SACRED CONCERT AT
WEST ROME BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of Shorter Ave. & Elm St.
SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 9:45 A.M.
W.A. Smith, Pastor

## ...Store, financ

A robber in dress clothes wearing long sideburns scooped $630 out of a cash register at a Dean Avenue convenience store Monday afternoon, ran to a waiting car and escaped, police said.

The robber, a medium-sized man, walked into Roy's Little Garden at 1901 Dean Ave., bought a 48-cent item and asked cashier Julie Knowles, wife of owner Roy Knowles, to bring him a box of cigars, according to officers.

While Mrs. Knowles away from her counter ing for the specific bra cigars the man mentio the man scooped the $6 all in $10 bills — out o open register, then ran side door, police said.

The robber got into a b car with an accomplice had waited outside and drove off — but not b Knowles, standing clos took down the car's number.

★★★

## Cars, bus and trucks slide around county

An 11-car pileup on Turkey Mountain Road and two separate five-car pileups on Georgia 140 and Georgia 156 were the most serious of several multiple-vehicle collisions in Floyd County Monday morning — caused by icy roads.

Floyd County police worked at least 20 accidents between 6:30 a.m. and 9 a.m. Monday. Even a Floyd County policeman wrecked his personal car Monday morning while driving to work when the car skidded off Park Road.

A schoolbus narrowly avoided wrecking Monday morning when it slid down a slick, hilly stretch of Walker Mountain Road, police said. And a transfer truck that skidded off Georgia 53 and

condition after her car sheet of ice on Georgia and slid into a tree. She identified as Jewel Pyle,

On Wayside Road, a m ist pulled his car onto shoulder to assist ano motorist whose car had off the road on ice. But Good Samaritan car was struck by a third car sli on the same ice.

There were two three four-car pileups reporte the Brushy Branch Monday morning and a tiple-car pileup on Wax R

County traffic police c in regular police office sonnel to assist them Mo morning in clearing traff the numerous accident s The Georgia State Patrol Rome city police also chi

Rome (Ga) News Tribune Tues. Jan 13, 1976

p. 2

Elba Clipper Nov 1953

# "Uncle Charlie" Porter Is Oldest Resident

By C. B. MCDOWELL

"Uncle Charlie" Porter, probably the oldest colored resident of this area, was born during slavery times in Henry County and lived there until after the abolition of slavery.

He said his first master was Mr. Potter, but afterward his new master was Mr. Porter, whose name he took.

After gaining his freedom, young Charlie Porter came to Coffee County and went to live with the family of Tobe Allred, a large plantation owner in the south part of the county. He worked on the plantation for several years and he said he could not have been treated better anywhere and learned to have great love and highest esteem for members of the Allred family.

A remarkable charateristic of "Uncle Charlie" is his refusal to grow old in appearance. Jess Blocker, rural mail carrier, said he found "Uncle Charlie" working at a turpentine still when he first began carrying the mail, 46 years ago, and he looked as old then as now. Many of our older residents say they have known him all of their lives and he has always been an old man. It is generally thought that he must be 100 years old or more.

"Uncle Charlie" owns his home with two acres of ground on the old Samson road, two miles south of Elba, where he lived many years. He has hogs, chickens, and raises a good garden.

The Centenarian and his wife frequently walk two miles to Elba and say they think nothing of walking such a short distance. His stamina and longevity is attributed to the fact that he is half Indian, deriving his rugged qualities from that hardy race.

"Uncle Charlie" said he never had any children of his own, but has a lot of boys and girls, including the Allred children, Jess Blocker, Oscar and Lee English, Ernest, Arthur and Jack Owen, Harold English, Dud English, Hollan Harrison, George Collier and others.

Suffering for want of bread, or clothing has no fear for Uncle Charlie as any of his boys will give him anything he needs if he asks them for help.

The former slave said that although he may not appear to be weak from old age, he cannot stand as much work as he used to. On a recent Saturday he went to see his boy and girl, Arthur Owen and his wife, Eliza, and their yard needed cleaning, so he gave it a good sweeping. He is always willing to help any of his boys and girls in any way he can.

"Uncle Charlie" has for many years been a familiar character on the streets of Elba with his glasses cocked above one eye and hanging below the other.

He said there is a big difference between the young folks when he was younger and now. When parents used to send their children to the store for groceries, they returned within an hour, but now they are likely to stay all day and perhaps a part of the night. He deplores this change in the habits of young people.

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written around 1954

***From:*** Parker, Randy
***Date:*** 2/27/2017 9:31:43 AM
***To:*** nellgilmer@troycable.net
***Subject:*** RE: Andalusia Article

Hey Nell,
Randy Parker again. I was able to get in touch with one of the Lewis family members. They don't remember the exact location but did say I was correct, when facing the Cemetery it is on the back right hand side. I haven't been to Elba yet, but will let you know when I come. In the meantime, below is a photo of where I believe he should be buried if memory serves me correctly.

*Randy H. Parker*
**Alabama ABC Board, SOC Division Supervisor**
**(334)-260-5403**

**From:** nellgilmer@troycable.net [mailto:nellgilmer@troycable.net]
**Sent:** Thursday, January 26, 2017 1:20 PM
**To:** Parker, Randy <Randy.Parker@abc.alabama.gov>
**Cc:** Chris Sutley <chrissutley@troycable.net>
**Subject:** Re: Andalusia Article

Interesting article. I'm forwarding it on to Chris Prescott Sutley here in Elba. I'm sure she will enjoy reading the article. She gave me some Prescott info to look up in the Daughters of the Amer. Revolution database. I need to go back there and look for more info after reading the article in the Andalusia Star.

Please let me know when you are in Elba again and I'll go to Evergreen Cemetery with you to see if you remember about where Uncle Charlie is buried. We want to put a marker there during the AL Bicentennial.

I might have a high school photo of your mother Eugenia in my high school file. If I do, I'll send you a copy. I remember her and her sister Louise. I never saw them after we graduated in 1952. I was away from here for 45 years, until we retired. I do know your sister Pat very well. She helped distribute the history of Elba book we published in 2013. Sweet lady!

Nell Wilson Gilmer

Info to be used on memorial for Uncle Charlie:

Charlie Porter

2 Jul 1854 – 12 Jan 1976

Age: 121-1/2 years

Affectionately known as

"Uncle Charlie"

Buried in this area on

16 Jan 1976

---

Facts: see attachments about the source of his last name.

Date of date of birth and date: Social Security death index

Death date: He was found dead at his home on Monday, Jan. 12. That date is used here. There was no date on the Soc. Security index; just the month and year.

**Eldon L. Merritt**

I would Love to be a part of any good group of people who are interested in locating the grave sites of Uncle Charlie Porter (Potter) and his wife Weedy. Charlie was always ready to share his story with anyone who asked. I feel that if the exact location cannot be found, then a fitting marker should be erected in the proper part of Evergreen cemetery in the City of Elba. It is with pride that I offer my help with time and money to bring closure to this lost and found matter. My heart felt thanks to Uncle Charlie.

1.
1.
1. **Sherry Prevett**

Erecting a monument in Elba honoring "Uncle Charlie" is a thoughtful, and kind gesture.It warms my heart to know there are individuals who truly care about others.Thank you.

Reply

**Fran Jackson**

Uncle Charlie was an icon in Elba.

**Debra Crosby**

I grew up as what was know as a town kid as I lived just across Whitewater Bridge. Saturday was shopping day and everyone went to town. My brother and I walked to town on Saturdays to spend our meager allowances. Uncle Charlie as he was called was a part of our visit to town. We always made sure to go by and say hello to him and share a smile and a story. His color nor mine was important and I never thought of it. He was just a wonderful loving man who loved the people of Elba, his home. He was not the only character we had in Elba and I am thankful for all of the people who made my childhood in Elba a wonderful place to grow up. The sack story was told, but most children who actually knew him took it as a joke that they held between Mr. Charlie and themselves and just let their parents use it without any fear.

**Carolyne Stokes Hornsby**

I grew up in Elba and remember always seeing uncle Charlie when we went to town, My Brother and me would always try to find him and talk to him while our Daddy and Momma was shopping, He would say there`s my boy`s and girl`s, I love little children, we were never afraid of him in spite of the stories they tried to scare us with. I remember seeing a picture of him in the Hospital sometime back in the late 70`s I think, He was smiling like he always did, I don`t think there is anyone From Elba that knew him that didn`t love him, we sure did

## Charlie Porter

United States Social Security Death Index

| | |
|---|---|
| Age: | 122 |
| Given Name: | Charlie |
| Surname: | Porter |
| Birth Date: | 02 Jul 1854 |
| State: | Alabama |
| Last Place of Residence: | Elba, Coffee, Alabama |
| Previous Residence Postal Code: | 36323 |
| Event Date: | Jan 1976 |

mom.

No image available

Record Collection:
United States Social Security Death Index

**Document Information:**

**Citing this Record**

"United States Social Security Death Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JY2F VMS : 20 May 2014), Charlie Porter, Jan 1976; citing U.S. Social Security Administration, *Death Master File*, database (Alexandria, Virginia: National Technical Information Service, ongoing).



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## Ouida Porter

Alabama Deaths, 1908-1974

| | |
|---|---|
| Name: | Ouida Porter |
| Event Date: | 23 Nov 1956 |
| Event Place: | Elba, Coffee, Alabama |
| Gender: | Female |
| Age (Original): | 63y |
| Birth Year (Estimated): | 1893 |
| Father's Name: | Unknown |
| Mother's Name: | Unknown |

## Images Available

To view these images you must do one of the following:

- Access the site at a family history center
- Access the site at a FamilySearch affiliate library

Record Collection:
Alabama Deaths, 1908-1974

**Document Information:**

| | |
|---|---|
| GS Film number | 1908913 |
| Reference ID | 22041 |

**Citing this Record**

"Alabama Deaths, 1908-1974," database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J6KF-G3J : 15 February 2018), Ouida Porter, 23 Nov 1956; citing reference 22041, Department of Health, Montgomery; FHL microfilm 1,908,913.



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